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General Assembly

Sixty-second session

Official Records

57th plenary meeting
Monday, 26 November 2007, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kerim ..... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Hannesson (Iceland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 121 (*continued*)

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

Mr. Romero-Martínez (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): Like other delegations, my delegation takes note of the importance that has been granted to this issue. For that reason, we welcome the fact that at the previous session the President of the General Assembly included the item on the agenda and that this year the President, with his usual intelligence is also granting it due priority and interest.

Honduras believes that the purpose of the revitalization of the General Assembly be to reassert the central role of the General Assembly pursuant to its Charter mandate as the principal deliberative organ for the adoption of actions and universal policies for the benefit of humanity.

We agree with other delegations about the lack of a report setting out in a logical manner the progress attained or indicating a clear direction for Member States. But we also wish to underscore that we have made some progress. Honduras greatly appreciates the work of the Facilitators — the Permanent Representatives of Senegal and San Marino. We are certain that they will continue their work in other specific areas, and we look forward to the endeavours of their successors, the representatives of Poland and Paraguay.

Honduras believes that mandate review is an important goal. The rationalization and unification of items and the adoption of coherent policies will make it possible, above all, to provide a united and universal response that will benefit both our Organization and our peoples, who sometimes see us as representing their hopes, and as possessing solutions to their most urgent problems.

Mandate review could also rationalize the resources that are currently scattered throughout the Organization. We also believe it is necessary to prioritize and refine our programme of work as well as to restructure and re-programme the Main Committees and improve their working methods.

In the past, we have said that the revitalization process must respond to the need to restore a proper balance of powers and functions among the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. In our view, it would be fitting to establish, perhaps informally, a coordination mechanism in order to ensure proper communication with a broad spirit of interdependence and a strong desire to cooperate. The proliferation of resolutions and the lack, sometimes, of an adequate mechanism to ensure compliance are disturbing.

As a founding country and one of the original signatories of the Charter, Honduras will continue to participate in all debates and negotiations designed to strengthen our Organization.

As we have often stated in this forum, Honduras aspires to a strong, united Organization that is solidly

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committed to the issues of the day, that will listen to the sometimes painful cries of humankind, and that will glimpse with satisfaction the everlasting smiles and eternal dreams of millions of human beings who yearn for a world of greater solidarity and sensitivity and that is filled with peace, justice and equality — a world of equality for all, a world that does not exclude anyone.

Ms. Blum (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me first to highlight the leadership of the President of the General Assembly and the able manner in which he is leading our work on the matter under consideration. Likewise, I would like to express my delegation's recognition to the Permanent Representatives of San Marino and Senegal for their work as Facilitators for the revitalization of the General Assembly during the previous session. Their contributions are an important starting point to continue the consideration of the matter at this session. Furthermore, my delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The General Assembly was established as the sole universal organ of the Organization, with a broad mandate that includes, inter alia, economic, social, political, and cooperation issues as well as those relative to disarmament and the maintenance of peace and security. The General Assembly has the authority to discuss any matter in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and to formulate the recommendations it considers appropriate.

As a founding Member of the United Nations, Colombia attaches great importance to the revitalization of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ and considers that this process is essential to the reform and strengthening of the Organization.

The process of revitalization has been long and slow. Nevertheless, significant progress has been achieved, such as improvement in the dialogue between the President of the General Assembly and Member States, the rationalization of the work of the Main Committees and the convening of thematic debates, which have made a positive contribution to the work of this body.

In that regard, we believe that greater progress can still be achieved in these areas through new thematic debates and more structured interactive work between the President of the General Assembly and Member States, which could begin a month in advance of the start of each session. It is necessary to continue the rationalization of the agenda of the Assembly and the reduction in the number of items, so that small delegations — the majority of delegations represented here — can fully carry out their responsibilities and cover issues of national interest.

Options for turning General Assembly debates into real exchanges of ideas, with interaction among Member States and with the opportunity to offer positive and constructive comments on the statements made, should be explored. There are also several matters on which the Assembly's resolutions could be shorter and more action-oriented. To that end, the Main Committees could improve the organization of their work in order to have more focused discussions.

It is also important for the Committees to make a greater effort to add value to their deliberations and resolutions in order to minimize the use of repetitive language negotiated at previous sessions. In that respect, the reports and recommendations of the Secretary-General can play an important role. They should focus on recent developments and in formulating new action-oriented suggestions. The recommendations in those reports should be examined in the light of their contribution to General Assembly revitalization.

Furthermore, adequate coordination is also required between the revitalization and mandate review processes, as both are concerned with the General Assembly agenda. In this regard, it is necessary to have clarity on the scope of those two processes in order to avoid duplication and achieve better results.

Colombia is concerned with the imbalance that exists in the relationships between the main bodies of the Organization and stresses the need to restore the balance stipulated in the United Nations Charter. The General Assembly should have a more active role in the consideration of issues related to peace and security, in accordance with functions assigned to it. Likewise, the encroachment on items within its competence by other bodies should be avoided. The consideration of issues such as human rights and humanitarian law belong exclusively and solely to the General Assembly.

The debate on Security Council reform that took place in this Hall two weeks ago made it clear that the

relationship and communication between that body and the General Assembly must improve. The holding of periodic meetings between the Presidents of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council, as well as the presentation of analytical reports by the Council to the Assembly are some of the ways to reach that goal. It is also necessary to have more frequent presentations and briefings by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly.

The implementation of General Assembly resolutions is another area where greater efforts are required. A greater commitment by States to implement the resolutions adopted by this body is necessary. The presentation of a report by the Secretary-General on the status of implementation would be useful.

In the specific area of the implementation of resolutions on revitalization, we regret not being able to refer to the report of the Secretary-General, as it was not published in time to be considered in our debate today.

The revitalization process should also include greater participation of the General Assembly in the election of its President and of the Secretary-General. In the election of the latter, different alternatives could be examined. Candidates could be presented a year before the election and Member States could express their preference by casting a ballot, which could be open or secret.

My delegation supports the establishment of an ad-hoc working group to continue the consideration of the revitalization of the General Assembly. It is important that during this session tangible results are achieved and that these are later reflected in a resolution that includes substantive elements to advance the process.

Colombia maintains its commitment to continue contributing to the revitalization of the General Assembly in order to strengthen its role and authority. My delegation will continue to support efforts to allow this body to fully carry out its functions as provided in the Charter of the United Nations. This is the only way that we can meet the goals of greater democracy, representation and effectiveness in the work of our Organization.

To conclude, allow me to congratulate and to express the support of my delegation to the Ambassadors of Paraguay and Poland for their appointment as facilitators of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the revitalization of the General Assembly.

Mr. Bodini (San Marino): First of all, I want to thank the President and all of the colleagues who so kindly mentioned Ambassador Badji and me in today's speeches. I wish at the same time to congratulate the Permanent Representatives of Poland and Paraguay on their appointment as new Co-Chairs for the Ad Hoc Working Group on the revitalization of the General Assembly.

Once again, I wish to mention the importance of the reform of the General Assembly in all its aspects. After spending much time — hours — with Ambassador Badji and many Members, I strongly believe that we are ready for a true reform of the General Assembly. Not only do we have to improve our working methods and the election and selection of the President of the General Assembly and of the Secretary-General, but, more importantly, our relationship with other organs of the United Nations must be improved and made more direct.

We must ensure that this Hall is the centre of our focus, in all of our speeches on existing issues. We must make sure that the General Assembly is at centre stage in our planning as we programme our responses and activities in this evolving world.

I take this opportunity again to thank all Member States for their support during the time Paul Badji and I spent as facilitators. I hope from the bottom of my heart that this year will be the right year for a strong reform of the Assembly.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on the issue. The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Agenda items 48 (*continued*), 116, 117 and 123

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Draft resolution (A/62/L.15)

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

United Nations reform: measures and proposals

Strengthening of the United Nations system

The Acting President: In connection with agenda item 48, members will recall that the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/62/89 has already been discussed, at the 39th plenary meeting, held on 30 October 2007.

I now give the floor to the representative of Kyrgyzstan to introduce draft resolution A/62/L.15.

Mr. Jeenbaev (Kyrgyzstan): On behalf of more than 80 sponsors, I would like to introduce, under item 48 of the agenda of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly, entitled "Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields", draft resolution A/62/L.15, entitled "World Day of Social Justice".

Both the World Summit and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly were devoted to the issues of maintaining global social development and recognizing the importance of the social well-being of all peoples. Achieving those goals has been declared a priority for the twenty-first century. The Declaration on Social Progress and Development proclaimed that

> "Social progress and development shall be founded on respect for the dignity and value of the human person and shall ensure the promotion of human rights and social justice". (*resolution 2542 (XXIV), article 2*).

Today, the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and its Programme of Action, as well as the Millennium Declaration, which encourages global dialogue on social development, form a basis for social justice at both the national and the international levels. Accordingly, there is today consensus on the need to pursue development, and the obligations to eradicate poverty and establish socially stable and safe societies have been set out.

We should note that, during the second half of the last century and the beginning of the third millennium, humankind has paid steadfast attention to ensuring social rights and the setting of social policy. However, we must acknowledge that continued social inequality in various parts of the world continues to be the basic obstacle to further development of the human potential; that inequality also fails to reflect the gradual development of that potential.

For that reason, the world community is increasingly aware of the fact that social policy is a problem of vital importance that can be solved only through concerted efforts. The responsibility for social development therefore lies with countries themselves. It cannot be successfully achieved without the collective efforts of the international community. Strengthening international cooperation is of great importance for the realization of a socially focused strategy, as well as for subsequent actions and initiatives.

We are convinced that the General Assembly's adoption of this draft resolution will lead to even greater attention by the international community to achieving the goals and resolving the problems set out in the Millennium Declaration and the Copenhagen Declaration and its Programme of Action. Its adoption would also be a demonstration of support for the principles of solidarity and tolerance and for the interests of all population groups on all continents in establishing a world policy of social justice.

On behalf of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, I would like to express our deep appreciation to all Member States that have co-sponsored and actively supported this draft resolution. I hope, and firmly believe, that the General Assembly will adopt this document by consensus.

Mr. Lemos Godinho (Portugal): I speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Turkey and Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Armenia, align themselves with this statement.

In September 2005, heads of States and Government gathered at the World Summit to assess the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits and the progress made in implementing the Millennium Declaration. They also sought to find additional momentum for the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The EU is pleased that, in the years since that meeting, there have been achievements in the reform process of the United Nations launched by the World Summit Outcome. In that regard, we would like to refer to the progress made in the work of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Human Rights Council and the Ad Hoc Committee on Mandate Review, as well as the progress made thus far in the areas of management reform, the adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the reform of the Economic and Social Council.

The European Union also wishes to commend the organization of key events and thematic debates during the sixty-second session of the General Assembly on such matters as climate change and financing for development, as well as the forthcoming specific meeting on development and the high-level plenary meeting devoted to the follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children. Coupled with other informal meetings on equally relevant matters, those events will contribute to the revitalization of both the General Assembly and the Organization as a whole, and to the follow-up of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields.

Allow me to draw the Assembly's attention to a number of specific issues.

With regard to the Economic and Social Council, the Union is committed to a strengthened Council as the central mechanism for system-wide coordination and the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of, and follow-up to, the major United Nations conferences in the economic, social and related fields. The adoption of resolution 61/16, on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council, the subsequent organization of the Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) and the launching of the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) constitute concrete steps towards strengthening the Council. As part of that strengthening, the European Union also looks forward to the discussions to be held on the adaptation of the work of the Council — including its organization of work, agenda and current methods — as per Council decision 2006/206.

The EU is also pleased with the adoption of the multi-year programme of work for the Annual Ministerial Review. We look forward to the discussions on the theme of the 2008 AMR, namely, "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to sustainable development", as well as to future discussions on global public health in 2009.

The AMR not only adds value to the fulfilment and implementation of the MDGs and other internationally agreed development goals, but is also a crucial mechanism to emphasize the Council's role as the policy coordination body of the United Nations system for economic, social and environmental matters.

The European Union is convinced that the involvement of all relevant development actors in the DCF process provides a unique opportunity to gather a wide range of inputs for a deepened dialogue and understanding on the international development cooperation agenda. With regard to the agenda of the DCF, the European Union considers it important that the Forum also addresses issues such as aid architecture and the implementation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

As for development, the 2005 Summit emphasized that it must be based on a truly global partnership. The European Union would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm its strong commitment to the MDGs and its continued support for developing countries in the implementation of their national development strategies through actions on aid volume, aid effectiveness, debt relief, innovative finance mechanisms, trade and the relevant international institutions. Actions to reach those goals at all levels should be undertaken in an integrated way that promotes efficiencies and reduces duplication and unnecessary competition.

On that foundation of partnership, the EU has taken effective measures to meet its commitments as a donor. It has collectively surpassed the 2006 target for official development assistance (ODA) of 0.39 per cent of gross national income (GNI), which was set in 2005 before the World Summit Outcome. Furthermore, the EU has set new ambitious targets for 2010 and 2015, including new levels for Africa. It is currently providing 57 per cent of global ODA, and is committed to reaching the target of 0.7 per cent of GNI in ODA by 2015. We will continue to make efforts to meet and exceed our timetables and invite other countries to follow suit.

Climate change poses one of the greatest challenges in history for humankind. Scientific evidence judiciously compiled by the Nobel Peace Prize-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) confirms and intensifies previous warnings about the magnitude of the challenge. Climate change is already altering the face of the Earth and will increasingly become a contributing factor to environmental, economic and security threats, endangering also the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals that the international community has placed at the core of its development efforts.

The scale of the challenge and the urgency of addressing it call for unprecedented international cooperation involving all countries in a global effort to halt climate change, based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and the respective capabilities of countries and with the United Nations system at the centre of that endeavor. In addition to mitigating the effects of climate change, adaptation is crucial. Developing countries, especially the most vulnerable ones, face new important challenges in adapting to climate change, which also hampers their achievement of the MDGs. The United Nations system has a key role to play in that respect.

The European Union therefore welcomes last week's consensus adoption of resolution 62/8, on overview of United Nations activities relating to climate change, and underlines the importance of the United Nations system addressing the issue of climate change in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. Furthermore, the EU would like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for briefing the wider membership about his recent trip to South America and Antarctica and for commenting on the latest report of the IPCC, once again sharing with all of us his views and concerns on climate change. In that same spirit, the EU would like to congratulate Assembly President Kerim for his dynamism in promoting discussion on climate change.

The European Union has had a leading role in this area and is firmly committed to continue to work towards growing international consensus on the need to take further and stronger actions to tackle the negative effects of climate change. Next month's United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali will be a crucial moment to transform into deeds the international political momentum galvanized by the high-level event convened by the Secretary-General on 24 September 2007, as well as to advance current negotiations with a view to agreeing a new multilateral, comprehensive, coherent and effective post-2012 regime by 2009. To that end, the thirteenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in Bali, must establish a clear road map towards the fifteenth Conference, which is to be held in Copenhagen in 2009.

The European Union would like to draw attention to the fact that HIV/AIDS remains a global scourge that must be combated at all levels through the scaling up of prevention, treatment, in particular antiretroviral therapy, care and support. In that connection, the development and implementation of inclusive country-led strategies based on the "Three Ones" principle is key. Special attention must therefore be paid to combating stigma and discrimination and protecting human rights — including those of vulnerable groups — as well as sexual and reproductive health and rights, in particular those of women and young people, in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. In that respect, the European Union looks forward to engaging in discussion on the modalities for the General Assembly's comprehensive review on HIV/AIDS that will take place in 2008.

As for peace and security — another major topic of the 2005 World Summit — the European Union encourages further progress on issues such as security sector reform; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; the role of natural resources in conflicts; the rule of law; electoral practices; peacebuilding; democratic governance; the protection of civilians and return of refugees and internally displaced persons; humanitarian assistance and development. In that respect, we would like to reiterate the unquestionable interconnection between development and security.

Finally, with regard to human rights, in complementarity to the action of the General Assembly and its Third Committee, the European Union hopes that all conditions are now in place for efficient and credible implementation of the Council's mandate, as foreseen in Assembly resolution 60/251. In that regard, the EU would like to see an improved and stronger system of special procedures emanating from the review of individual mandates that just started during the sixth session of the Human Rights Council.

The European Union remains committed to the principles and fundamental rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and looks forward to the commemoration of its sixtieth anniversary, in 2008. It is our belief that we should do so by implementing and mainstreaming human rights in the work of the Organization, including at the field level, and by counting on and supporting the valuable work of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and her Office.

In conclusion, the European Union is fully committed to fulfilling the principles contained in the World Summit Outcome, whereby development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing.

Mrs. Chabau (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation associates itself with the statement to be made on this subject by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. We would also like to make some comments on this issue, which is of particular importance for developing countries.

We are virtually halfway to the target set for the achievement of the modest objectives of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However, the achievement of the Goals is each day further from becoming a reality. In accordance with the MDGs, by 2015 we should have reduced the number of people living in extreme poverty in developing countries by half. However, while 1.276 billion people were living in extreme poverty in 1990, that number has grown to 2.5 billion today.

By 2015, we should reduce the under-5 mortality rate by two thirds. However, 10.1 million children continue to die before their fifth birthday, mainly as a result of preventable causes. Obviously, we will not be able to achieve that goal.

We set out to halt HIV/AIDS and to begin to reduce its spread by 2015. Nevertheless, last year, the number of people who died as a result of that disease rose to 2.9 million.

We established the goal of achieving universal primary education by 2015. However, 115 million children lack access to primary education. At the current pace, when will we be able to announce the achievement of that goal?

We were supposed to guarantee environmental sustainability by 2015. However, the important goals that we agreed upon at Johannesburg in order to achieve true sustainable development are still far from becoming realities. The threat of accelerated global climate change is growing, together with that of environmental degradation. Today, the situation is much more serious, the dangers are greater and we have much less time left.

The so-called development agenda for the poorest nations is far from truly being implemented. Developing countries continue to suffer from the scourge of poverty, a lack of resources and marginalization. Their severe economic problems continue to grow, together with armed conflicts, natural disasters and the spread of diseases.

While 1 per cent of the world's richest people control 40 per cent of its wealth, the poorest 50 per cent of population has barely 1 per cent. Inequalities continue to grow among and within countries. The rich continue to become richer and the poor to become poorer. Unfortunately, that trend continues to characterize the current state of international relations, to the detriment of the full enjoyment of the right to development, which remains a pipe dream for the world's poor nations.

Lasting solutions to the issues addressed in the Monterrey Consensus — such as official development assistance (ODA), external debt, direct foreign investment and international trade — also remain illusory. Despite the promises made, ODA continues to decrease and remains significantly below 0.7 per cent. In 2006, it accounted for only 0.3 per cent of the gross national product of developed countries.

The external debt of developing countries continues to increase. Last year, it reached a staggering $2.851 trillion.

Developing countries continue to participate to a very small degree in international trade compared with industrialized countries. Developing countries, which have nearly four fifths of the world's population, take part in only one third of international trade. Their marginalization in the international market is increasing, which is reinforcing the net transfer of financial resources from the South to the North and consolidating the unequal distribution of costs and benefits resulting from that process.

Paradoxically, each year, more than $1 trillion continues to be invested in military spending and

additional billions of dollars in advertising. With scarcely 10 per cent of the total resources currently used for military spending, we could achieve the MDGs. Regrettably, the industrialized world seems to have overlooked all of this and continues to lack the political will to take historic decisions that would correct the structural inequalities of the international economic system, which is completely unsustainable.

Today, it is more necessary than ever before that developed countries honour the commitments that they have made at the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields. Those commitments cannot remain dead letters or mere political slogans aimed at diluting responsibilities or delaying their fulfilment.

It is time that the entire international community give responsible and in-depth consideration to the situation that developing countries continue to endure as a result of the unjust and unequal world economic order, which has proved to be unsustainable. Resolving the problems that developing countries continue to face and preserving nature and the human race itself are issues that concern the entire international community, without distinctions between rich and poor.

The objectives have been identified. However, if we are to be able to attain them, it is vital that developed countries demonstrate the necessary political will and meet their commitments — an issue that undoubtedly remains the key challenge to be overcome. Only then we will be able to guarantee a true and just global partnership for development.

Mr. Edrees (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Egypt attaches special importance to the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields, which have made major contributions to the agenda for action on international development based on partnership, respect and solidarity.

The beginning of the sixty-second session witnessed a series of high-level meetings on the implementation of those decisions. First was the high-level event on climate change, and it was followed by the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development, in preparation for the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, to be held in Doha in the second half of 2008. At the same time, negotiations are ongoing in various Committees — particularly the Second and Third Committees — on draft resolutions related to various issues in this sphere.

Despite the efforts of the United Nations in the area of development, many decisions adopted at the major conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields have yet to be sufficiently implemented. We are closely following efforts to review those decisions, including in the following areas.

First, developed countries are still not honouring their commitments to provide sufficient financial resources to United Nations operational activities in the area of development. Such activities have seen an ever-sharper decline in financing from the programme budget through voluntary contributions. This means that developed countries are linking financing to their political agendas. That in turn affects the neutrality of the United Nations and contradicts relevant General Assembly resolutions affirming the principles of national ownership and sovereignty and rejecting double standards and conditionalities.

Secondly, there is a growing tendency to separate environmental issues, in particular climate change, from issues of sustainable development. In that context, we should be cautious of going too far, as the implications of those attempts will be reflected in the long-term by widening the gap between the rich and the poor, and at the same time will not achieve the target of sustainable development. However, that does not affect our full support for efforts to deal with the challenges raised by climate change. The developing countries, especially the African States, are the lowest emitters, yet they are the most affected by the impact. Thus, efforts by the General Assembly — supported by the Secretary-General — must focus on reaching a substantive and balanced agreement to address the issue, while taking into account information provided by international experts on the current situation and its causes. The needs of developing countries must also be taken into account, including how to enhance their capabilities to adapt to the threats emanating from this phenomenon by providing financing, technology transfer and capacity-building. Commitments between developing and developed countries must be balanced according to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, burdens and obligations.

Mechanisms for the implementation, follow-up and coordination of these decisions exist within the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, but the political will to achieve them is still missing. On the contrary, we are of the view that some seek to impose those commitments on developing countries only, as they are the recipients of assistance and in order to prevent implementation of the decisions by the developed countries.

While developed countries choose to ignore their own human rights situations, they intentionally focus on the same situations in developing countries, while calling for enforcement of the rule of law, democracy and political, economic and social reform at the national level, while also ignoring efforts to exert parallel efforts in international relations, which has resulted in the absence of good governance at the international level. That situation contributes to mistrust and division among the general membership and creates new international situations that go beyond the scope of normal international relations and the agreed procedures for international law. It also leads to double standards in the consideration of issues of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, thus threatening the non-proliferation system and international peace and security.

In the economic and social fields, and despite the end of an era of summits and conferences that extended over the past ten years and resulted in consensus decisions, it is necessary to strengthen the ability of the United Nations to analyse, monitor and follow up international and regional developments, by reforming the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and providing it with financial resources — as was the case with the Department of Political Affairs — in accordance with the proposed reform plan of the Secretary-General.

While expressing our willingness to consider proposals to support United Nations efforts in the field of preventive diplomacy, we affirm the need to address the issue of transparency and consultation with Member States. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs will also have to share the same support requested by the Department of Political Affairs, in accordance with the 2005 World Summit Outcome, which established a link between security, development and human rights.

This leads us to the implementation of the outcomes of summits related to the status of women and their empowerment. It has become clear that we have lost our way in arguing over the establishment of new structures and entities without focusing on the true developmental needs of women and on giving equitable consideration to their needs — as compared to those of men — in the fields of education, health care and others, respect for their basic human rights in their countries of immigration, their rights under occupation and their rights as indigenous inhabitants. It is also necessary to pay attention to the status of the child at the international level by prohibiting violence against children and ensuring their rights in education, health care and economic development.

In that context, coordinated and integrated follow-up to outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits calls for improvement in the performance of the Organization and an increase in the efficiency of its services in order to make the best use of available resources. That follow-up would encourage us to avoid issuing new mandates that could contradict the current mandates of existing bodies and to avoid reviewing mandates related to sensitive political issues that have special importance to specific countries. We also need to avoid any attempts to link the budget with reform, which will lead us to repeat past confrontations among the general membership and deepen the feelings of mistrust — and now is the time to put an end to those feelings.

In this context, it is essential to maintain the credibility of the General Assembly in dealing with international challenges through faithful and effective implementation of its resolutions, and by respecting what has been previously agreed on, including the Rio and Johannesburg Principles, because focusing on media coverage and convening meetings at different levels must be met by coordinated and effective action for implementation, otherwise, poor implementation will further erode the credibility of international collective work in the economic and social fields. The resulting weak credibility of the international collective security system could lead to limiting the role of United Nations instead of strengthening it, and I do not believe that anyone present in this Hall wishes to do that.

Mr. Yaroshevich (Belarus) (spoke in Russian): My delegation's statement is on agenda item 117 entitled, "United Nations reform: measures and

proposals". The Belarusian delegation welcomes the management and organizational measures adopted to implement reform of the Secretariat and of the United Nations system overall. In 2006 Member States received the report of the Secretary-General on investing in the United Nations for a stronger Organization worldwide. The reactions from delegates led to the majority adoption of resolution 60/260, and Secretariat reform took a constructive turn.

We emphasize the need to continue efforts to broaden opportunities for the participation of suppliers from developing countries and States with transitional economies, in United Nations procurement. Reform of the procurement system must be aimed at establishing a transparent and balanced mechanism for procurement activity and the establishment of truly equal conditions for all Member States and economic actors.

The Belarusian delegation notes the progress achieved in implementing a global project on information technology in the use at Headquarters in New York, Vienna, Geneva and Nairobi of the best practices and technological achievements in the interest of Member States. We believe it is valuable to continue efforts to make appropriate use of technology in all six official languages of the United Nations. We also believe it is advisable to continue efforts to resolve staffing issues in the United Nations Office in Nairobi. It is necessary to adopt urgent measures to fill vacancies in the language services of the office. The United Nations office on the African continent must operate effectively, in particular bearing in mind the very important agenda of the Organization in Africa.

I wish to take this opportunity to note the absence of significant progress in the equitable representation of regional groups among United Nations Secretariat staff and management. Here, there are still serious divides. One has the feeling that the Western European and Others Group remains the main supplier of Secretariat staff, in particular for United Nations Headquarters. The most underrepresented region in Secretariat management has been and remains Eastern Europe. None of the efforts made by the Group of Eastern European States to broaden their representation have been greeted with responsive practical actions to correct the situation. It is a very strange situation, bearing in mind the high qualifications of specialists from our region.

With regard to system-wide reform, we would like to say a few words about institution building as it pertains to the Human Rights Council and the work to improve the system-wide coherence of United Nations efforts in the areas of promoting development, the environment and humanitarian assistance. The delegation of Belarus welcomes the beginning and first positive results of the work of the Human Rights Council, which the General Assembly established. On 16 November, the Third Committee adopted a draft Human Rights Council text (A/C.3/62/L.32, as amended) on institution-building and a set of guidelines regarding mandate-holders in the context of special procedures.

The Committee also supported Council decisions regarding country-specific universal periodic reviews. In that connection, we have great expectations for our ability to eliminate politicization and double standards in evaluating the human rights situations of Member States. Belarus would like to express its support for the decision regarding institution-building as it pertains to the Human Rights Council, especially as regards the establishment of a mechanism for universal periodic review and the streamlining of special procedures.

As a central element of reform in the system-wide coherence of the United Nations in the areas of development, the environment and humanitarian assistance, we believe that there is a need to maintain the key role of national Governments in the setting of priorities for the operational work of the United Nations in a given country. United Nations bodies can provide assistance in developing national development priorities, but they cannot impose them. In the work of reform, we need to rely on the intergovernmental status of the United Nations and the principle of multilateralism in addressing issues. What is unacceptable is the concept of a single country, United Nations representative, programme or agency determining the budget. We cannot support the idea of merging the operational activities of all bodies into a single United Nations agency. The adoption of such an approach would result in a diminished informed and speedy reaction by a single agency to the needs of recipient countries.

Belarus is also concerned about the dissatisfaction of several delegations with the quality of the United Nations interactions with the Bretton Woods institutions and bilateral donors. That has a

negative impact on the predictability and stability of financial flows allocated for development.

In conclusion, the delegation of Belarus would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm its willingness to participate very actively in the work to develop effective ways to reform the United Nations.

Mr. Ale Magar (Nepal): Nepal highly appreciates the importance that the President of the General Assembly has given to the effective implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, including the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

In the early years of this decade, the international community has made concrete commitments at various summits and conferences to advance socio-economic development in the world. In 2000, the Millennium Declaration gave us the MDGs. In 2001, the Brussels Programme of Action was agreed for the world's least developed countries. The World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in 2002, produced the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation on sustainable development. In the same year, the international community agreed the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development. In 2003, the Almaty Programme of Action for landlocked developing countries was developed. Significantly, those summits and conferences showed us the way forward in the form of agreed commitments, goals and programmes. They also identified major principles, including the principles of global partnership and national ownership in the area of socio-economic development.

At the half-way mark to the target date for meeting those commitments, the report card on achieving them shows mixed progress. While some countries have partially made significant strides in achieving the MDGs, many others, particularly least developed countries, are still lagging behind in achieving them. Unless we accelerate our efforts now, the achievement of those Goals in the targeted framework will be a distant reality. We must therefore build on the achievements made thus far and strive to speed up their implementation in the days to come.

Nepal attaches great significance to the role of the United Nations system in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits and conferences to achieve socio-economic development. We support greater engagement by the Economic and Social Council in advancing the socio-economic agenda. We support system-wide coherence and emphasize the need for inter-agency coordination in the United Nations system for the successful implementation of the development outcomes. We encourage the regional commissions and the specialized agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations to enhance their roles in strengthening country programmes for development.

The Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization can be expected to play more effective roles to implement the outcomes of the major summits and conferences in the social, economic and related fields. There is a need to further expand the role of those institutions and to reorient their actions in advancing socio-economic development in the world's poorer countries. In particular, their monitoring and follow-up mechanisms should be strengthened by improving indicators and developing a results-based matrix in the implementation of the outcomes of major summits and conferences.

The year 2008 will be a defining moment for the development agenda. We will be reviewing the progress made in the implementation of the MDGs and the outcome of the 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development. In addition, the General Assembly will be undertaking a mid-term review of the Almaty Programme of Action for landlocked developing countries. At the twelfth Conference of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, to be held in Accra, we will also be addressing the challenges to development posed by globalization. Nepal attaches vital importance to those events and stresses that they provide renewed opportunities to further accelerate the implementation of our agreed goals and commitments in the area of development.

Nepal is committed to integrate the internationally agreed development goals, commitments and programmes into its national policies and programmes. We have already incorporated many of them into our national development plan. Our interim plan focuses on commitments to people-centred development, with a strong emphasis on good governance and poverty reduction. We hope that our development partners will provide an enhanced level of support to help us achieve our planned goals and targets.

The peace process in Nepal has made significant strides since the historic signing, in November 2006, of a comprehensive peace accord between the Government of Nepal and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). We are striving to establish a new Nepal that is committed to the fundamental values of democracy, social justice and people's progressive discourse.

The decade-long conflict came to an end with tangible achievements, such as empowerment of the masses and acceptance of a more inclusive and democratic framework for Nepal's various marginalized groups, including women, indigenous peoples, Madhesis, Dalits and people in the backward areas. We are now entering the phase of restructuring the State through elections to the Constituent Assembly, in which the elected representatives of the people will write their own constitution. Those developments are vital in creating an atmosphere conducive to paving way for better implementation of internationally agreed goals and commitments in the area of socio-economic development.

In conclusion, the international community cannot afford to be an apathetic spectator while millions of people in the world continue to languish in crippling poverty and exclusion. It has a special responsibility to lift them out of that morass.

Relegating poverty to history is possible, and it is within human reach if we act in concert. This solemn pledge cannot be achieved without renewed international political will, the significant scaling up of resources, sustained policies and programmes and committed national leadership. Together, we can make it happen. This is the lesson we have learned from these summits and conferences.

Along with all members of my delegation, I personally feel greatly honoured and privileged to be attending the sixty-second session of the General Assembly, although the journey here was a really difficult one. I was denied a United States visa about seven months ago, in spite of having been privileged enough to receive a written invitation from Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe to join a team working to establish the United Nations office to study electoral systems and functions. I think that the point of such an action and tendency on the part of the ruling class of the United States is definitely not obvious to people around the world, who have great respect for them. This is what has made people around the world think about locating United Nations Headquarters in a location that is easily accessible to all.

Ms. Al-Ghanim (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express, on behalf of the State of Kuwait, our deep appreciation for all the efforts made by the Secretary-General in his leadership of the Organization, efforts that are reflected in the various reports he has submitted for discussion during the current session. These reports contain, inter alia, his calls for the importance of implementing the provisions of the Millennium Declaration and not allowing it to conclude as a mere memory in the history of the Organization, thus affirming his concern to carry out his mandate fully.

Economic and social development is at the core of the goals and activities that the United Nations carries out. Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), should remain within the comprehensive framework of United Nations development activities. There is also need for the full implementation of the commitments agreed upon in all major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields, as well as for strengthening the international partnership for development, based on the recognition of national leadership and ownership of the development strategies of States.

Despite the fact that two years have elapsed since the 2005 World Summit, and seven years since the Millennium Summit, the challenges and dangers facing international peace and security, such as poverty, hunger, the spread of such dangerous and infectious diseases as AIDS and malaria, and the deterioration of the environment, are still present and threatening us. The first Follow-up International Conference on Financing of Development, scheduled to be held in Doha during the second half of 2008, provides a great opportunity to assess progress made in achieving the MDGs.

The State of Kuwait has made good progress in translating the commitments and resolutions of the 2005 World Summit into tangible results, and has also achieved the MDGs, particularly in the fields of education, health and advancing the role of women in society. It has devised policies capable of uplifting society and realizing more social and economic

progress, as well as raising the standard of living per capita.

Given our absolute belief in human values and international solidarity, since gaining our independence, we have adopted a generous programme of assistance to developing countries. In 1961, the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development was established making it the second oldest development fund in the world, after the International Monetary Fund. The Kuwait Fund has financed hundreds of infrastructure projects in over 100 countries, valued at more than $12 billion, thereby exceeding by more than double the percentage of gross national product (GNP) slated for development assistance and agreed upon internationally.

In this respect, it is incumbent upon developed countries to support the economic structures of developing ones and to adhere to their commitments by supplying them with adequate financial and technological assistance in order to reach the level of 0.07 per cent of their GNP as official development assistance. This aid should be provided within the framework of supporting the national strategies that the developing countries themselves have adopted.

Not only is it regrettable to see poverty, hunger and disease persist in developing countries, but it is also painful to see more than half the world's population live on less than $2 a day. This requires a serious look at the impediments to development in the developing countries and a real review of these impediments. Here, the State of Kuwait calls upon the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Bretton Woods institutions to reduce restrictions imposed on the exports of developing countries and to put forth a more just and equitable international trade system for the poor countries and the least developed ones, as well as to expand their participation in the decision-making process of the WTO and take into consideration the concerns of the poor and least developed countries.

We reiterate our commitment to the efforts being exerted to reduce the impact of the challenges facing our world today, particularly those dealing with the environment. The State of Kuwait follows with utmost concern the phenomenon of climate change. Despite confirmation by all the reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concerning the difficulty of relying on one strategy alone to mitigate the impact of this phenomenon, we see that the focus is still centred on reducing the use of fossil fuel. Other factors resulting from human behaviour which pollute the air and cause a more severe pattern of climate change are ignored, including deforestation, urban expansion at the expense of agriculture land and the effects of nuclear energy. These are the main causes for the accumulation of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere and global warming.

Hopefully, the upcoming meeting in Bali, Indonesia, of States parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol will provide an opportunity to deal with this subject in detail. In this context, we would like to mention that the State of Kuwait recently donated $150 million at the presidential meeting in Riyadh of OPEC countries on the subject of energy and climate research.

The State of Kuwait will remain true to its promise to provide all the support and aid it can to its friends among the countries of the developing world. This results from our strong belief in the principle of sharing, with a view to achieving sustainable development and a more prosperous and stable life for all peoples of the world.

Ms. Aitimova (Kazakhstan): This year marks the midpoint for efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

While speaking about the achievement of these Goals, we note success in eliminating poverty and hunger in many countries. However, we need to coordinate multilateral action to achieve the MDGs for the creation of an enabling international economic environment to support developing countries' efforts to achieve sustained economic growth and development.

Kazakhstan is committed to its obligations to reach the MDGs and is constantly implementing its long-term development strategy, known as "Kazakhstan 2030". Our main objective in the area of economic policy is to ensure that Kazakhstan joins the ranks of the most competitive economies. To this end, we are implementing an industrial and innovative programme to diversify the economy, increase production of value-added goods and services and lay the foundation for a high-technology service economy.

It is widely acknowledged that, in order to achieve the MDGs, additional efforts have to be made

to assure that countries with special needs will make the progress necessary under all MDG targets. The challenges and constraints of landlocked developing countries are enormous. It is recognized that high trade transaction costs, influenced by a lack of access to the sea and remoteness from major markets, represent the main cause of marginalization of the landlocked developing countries. That is why it is very important to ensure the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of major international conferences on trade and development in order for small and vulnerable economies to finally get a chance to enjoy the benefits and advantages promised at those conferences.

Kazakhstan believes that social development issues should continue to be among the priority items in the agendas of the principal bodies of the United Nations. Social development, the well-being of the population, poverty elimination, education and decent job creation are key elements for preserving global collective security and peace.

I would therefore like to commend the delegation of the Kyrgyz Republic for initiating the draft resolution entitled "World Day of Social Justice" (A/62/L.15), which was introduced today; Kazakhstan will be a sponsor. We believe that the annual celebration of the World Day of Social Justice will give an opportunity to societies and communities at all levels to draw attention once again to the importance of social development and the achievement of social justice around the world.

The delegation of Kazakhstan would like to commend the Secretary-General for his commitment to the creation of a more transparent and accountable Secretariat, with the highest levels of efficiency, competence and integrity. We believe that adequate institutional follow-up to the recommendations of the General Assembly and United Nations oversight bodies will transform in a positive manner the human resource base of the Organization, enhance its managerial decision-making tools and allow for better financial control, in addition to more accurate and timely management reporting. The highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity should have the paramount consideration in the employment of the staff, and due regard should also be given to the principle of equitable geographical distribution, in accordance with Article 101 of the Charter.

Our delegation welcomes the measures being undertaken by the Secretariat to improve the United Nations procurement system. As a new emerging donor country, Kazakhstan is interested in improving procurement opportunities for vendors from developing countries and countries with economies in transition, and in diversifying the sources of goods and services. Over the last decades the competitiveness of the economies of these countries has increased considerably. In order to promote procurement activities in such countries the United Nations Procurement Service should periodically update its field procurement system, pay increased attention to the organization of seminars and training courses for local contractors and distribute information in the mass media in local languages.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/32 of 19 November 2002, I now call on the observer for the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Mrs. Filip (Inter-Parliamentary Union): I am pleased to address the General Assembly on the agenda item on the strengthening of the United Nations system. As we have done during previous sessions of the General Assembly, I would like to refer to this theme from the perspective of the developing parliamentary dimension to the work of the United Nations, and the benefits that it entails.

I would recall that we are referring here to a dimension that needs to be forged by parliaments and their members, and which has to be firmly rooted in the activities that parliaments carry out at the national level at home. It includes action by parliaments to contribute to and monitor international negotiations and debates at the United Nations, and to ensure national compliance with international norms and the rule of law. It also involves scrutinizing the activities of the United Nations and providing input into their deliberations.

As we have stressed previously, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is convinced that members of parliament can play an extremely important role in building national political support for international action. In the IPU's view, which is shared by many United Nations Member States, the United Nations stands to gain considerably by making sure that parliaments and their members have a full and

undistorted understanding of major processes and activities under way at the United Nations.

It was with this understanding that, one year ago, the General Assembly adopted consensus resolution 61/6 on "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union". Since then, we have been focusing on the effective implementation of this bold and forward-looking resolution.

As a general recommendation, the resolution encourages the United Nations and the IPU to continue to cooperate closely in various fields, in particular peace and security, economic and social development, international law, human rights, democracy and gender issues, bearing in mind the significant benefits of cooperation between the two organizations, to which the report of the United Nations Secretary-General attests.

It is precisely because of the importance that the IPU attaches to this growing cooperation that we are devoting time and resources in order to ensure careful consideration and political guidance of this process. One of the measures that the IPU has already taken, therefore, has been the establishment of a dedicated parliamentary committee on United Nations affairs, in which all parliaments can participate and bring their contribution to the development of this parliamentary dimension to the work of the United Nations, and monitor its implementation.

Allow me to recall briefly some of the IPU's activities over this past year in support of strengthening the United Nations system, and in particular by following up on and implementing the provisions of General Assembly resolution 61/6. As a first point, the resolution encouraged the IPU to further strengthen its contribution to the work of the General Assembly, including its revitalization, as envisaged in the relevant 2006 and 2007 General Assembly resolutions, and in relation to the newly established United Nations bodies such as the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission.

Regarding the revitalization of the General Assembly, the IPU has had the opportunity to consult and engage with United Nations Member States on this very important topic. In light of the relevant experience residing within national parliaments in the area of modernizing and revitalizing legislative bodies, we have shared with the General Assembly a series of ideas, proposals and good practices and look forward to finding the most adequate ways to further contribute to this process.

Moreover, last month in Geneva, the IPU's new parliamentary Committee on United Nations Affairs heard from and engaged in a discussion with the President of the Human Rights Council, and will be seeking to define modalities whereby parliaments can best act in support of the Council, particularly in the context of the universal periodic review process. This will ensure accurate reporting on the implementation of international human rights instruments and help identify those areas where additional efforts are required.

In respect of the Peacebuilding Commission, the IPU has been closely following deliberations and action as they concern Burundi and Sierra Leone, and has been working with parliaments and authorities in both countries, with a view to building strong international support for the new legislative bodies as key components for sustainable peace and development.

As recommended by General Assembly resolution 61/6, the IPU is also assuming a more active role in support of the Economic and Social Council, particularly in the implementation of the new functions devolved to the Council by the 2005 World Summit. In this regard, the IPU has taken the lead in shaping a parliamentary dimension to the new Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) and, after voicing its commitment on the occasion of the launch of the DCF earlier this year, is now actively preparing for the first substantive session of the Forum next year.

Development cooperation will gradually be mainstreamed into the IPU's own regular programme of work. At the same, the IPU will be convening a representative group of members of parliament from both developed and developing countries, well versed in development cooperation issues, to participate in and contribute to the first DCF stakeholders forum next spring, thus providing direct input to the DCF. As a member of the DCF advisory board, the IPU will be consulting closely with the United Nations on the agenda and expected outcome of this meeting.

In paragraph 6 of resolution 61/6, the General Assembly welcomed the partnership agreement concluded between the United Nations Democracy Fund and the IPU and looked forward to growing

cooperation in the realm of democracy and good governance.

Indeed, with United Nations Development Account funding, the IPU is currently implementing two projects: one is designed to enhance the capacity of parliaments in Africa to enact and revise national legislation so as to ensure compliance with international human rights standards; the other is in support of women parliamentarians in Burundi, which includes initiatives aimed at bringing women members of parliament from all political parties to work together for the promotion of women's rights in Burundi.

In a much broader context, the IPU and the United Nations Development Programme signed a new memorandum of understanding last week designed to expand their cooperation in support of democratic governance around the world in key areas such as national budget processes, action by parliaments in advancing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), poverty reduction strategies and greater parliamentarian involvement in development cooperation.

Last but not least, and as we had the opportunity to say very recently in this Hall (see A/62/PV.44), the IPU is proud to be part of a joint effort to promote an international day of democracy on a date which has been chosen to coincide with the anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Democracy. The precepts and principles enshrined in that important political document, endorsed 10 years ago by national parliaments from around the globe, are as valid today as ever before. We look forward to working closely with the United Nations with a view to systematically integrating these core values into efforts to strengthen democracy worldwide.

A further recommendation of resolution 61/6 calls for the development of the annual parliamentary hearing at the United Nations and other specialized parliamentary meetings at the United Nations as joint United Nations-IPU events. Last week the IPU and the United Nations, through the Office of the President of the General Assembly, joined forces in convening a very successful parliamentary hearing on the theme of reinforcing the rule of law in international relations. The meeting attracted great interest from the national parliaments, which were well-represented. It also drew in many representatives from permanent missions, as well as senior United Nations officials and academia, for a substantive, interactive and politically charged debate.

This joint event succeeded in raising awareness among politicians around issues that are, or should be, high on the agenda of the United Nations, such as meeting commitments in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation, strengthening the international criminal justice regime and implementing the international global counter-terrorism strategy. The hearing resulted in a number of recommendations for the United Nations, as well as proposals for action by parliaments in support of United Nations efforts. The results of the hearing will be circulated shortly as an official document of the General Assembly.

Finally, General Assembly resolution 61/6 calls for closer involvement, as appropriate, of the IPU in the elaboration in system-wide strategies for consideration by the United Nations system and the United Nations system Chief Executive Board for Coordination, with a view to ensuring greater and more coherent support by parliaments to the work for the United Nations.

We have yet to determine the best ways to make this recommendation operational. However, it is evident to us that there are a number of areas that can allow for meaningful and mutually beneficial exchanges, such as delivering on the Millennium Development Goals, mobilizing political action in combating climate change and institutional gender mainstreaming, to name a few.

The IPU remains committed to further developing a strategic partnership with the United Nations. In so doing, we are guided by the considerations and proposals set forward in the IPU policy paper on the nature of the relationship between the United Nations and the world of parliaments, submitted for consideration in the IPU Committee on United Nations Affairs and endorsed by IPU member parliaments on the occasion of the IPU's 117th Assembly, held in early October. This document has been submitted to the United Nations and should soon be circulated in the General Assembly as our further contribution to this agenda item.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/62/L.15, entitled "World Day of Social Justice". Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I would like to announce that since its introduction, the following

countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/62/L.15: Brazil, Cyprus, Montenegro, Oman, the Philippines and Thailand.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution?

Draft resolution A/62/L.15 was adopted (resolution 62/10).

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda items 48, 116, 117 and 123.

Agenda item 13

The role of diamonds in fuelling conflict

Letter from the head of the delegation of the European Commission transmitting a report on the progress made towards the implementation of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (A/62/543 and Add. 1)

Draft resolution (A/62/L.16)

The Acting President: I have received a request from the observer for the European Community to be the first speaker in the debate on this item. Members will recall that the European Community is Chair of the Kimberley Process for 2007.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees, without setting a precedent, to hear the observer for the European Community, Chair of the Kimberley Process, as the first speaker in the debate on this item?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 3208 (XXIX) of 11 October 1974, and the decision just taken, I now call on the observer of the European Community.

Mr. Kovanda (European Community): It is a real honour to have this opportunity to address the Assembly today, present a report on the work of the Kimberley Process and introduce the content of draft resolution A/62/L.16.

Since the Kimberley Process began, in the late 1990s, to better coordinate the international response to the phenomenon of conflict diamonds, we have seen a dramatic turn-around in the security situation in several diamond-producing countries, notably, Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Implementation of the Kimberley Process has both contributed to and benefited from this progress in the real world. The only current case of conflict diamonds is that of Côte d'Ivoire, with trade in its diamonds being prohibited by Kimberley Process rules and the Security Council embargo.

More rough diamonds than ever before are being handled in accordance with Kimberley Process rules. An estimated 100,000 to 250,000 carats per annum are produced in Côte d'Ivoire, compared to the worldwide annual production of 176 million carats. Virtually all diamond producing and trading centres now implement the scheme. This year has seen significant seizures and prosecutions relating to conflict diamonds and smuggling. The Kimberley Process is therefore protecting the legitimate diamond industry, which plays a significant part in the economies of many countries, thereby giving many people a chance for a better life.

I would like to highlight two examples from this year of successful partnership in support of the Kimberley Process, namely, the cases of Ghana and Liberia.

Last year, in Gaborone, the Kimberley Process agreed a balanced package with Ghana, which was facing criticism regarding its national implementation. I am now pleased to report considerable improvement. Ghana is implementing a plan of action to control its informal sector, with the support of additional monitoring and technical assistance provided by the European Community, South Africa, the United States and a team led by a past Chairperson of the Kimberley Process to assess progress. The diamond industry, represented by the World Diamond Council, has helped to monitor exports. United Nations experts on Côte d'Ivoire sanctions have welcomed "the cooperation of the Kimberley Process and its efforts to encourage participating States to introduce further improvements in their internal control systems". (*A/62/543, annex, para. 8*)

They also recognized Ghana's "remarkable efforts that have enhanced the credibility of its internal control system and its diamond import/export regime" *(Ibid.)*.

This year in Brussels, it was agreed to move to a system of risk-based monitoring of exports. Ghana continues to work on registering informal miners and estimating production levels, with the support of the

United States, the European Community and World Diamond Council.

Another good example of Kimberley Process partnership in action is the case of Liberia. Kimberley Process participants and observers — including the United States, the United Arab Emirates, South Africa, Canada, Sierra Leone and the World Diamond Council, as well as the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the United Nations Development Programme — have all worked closely with the Government of Liberia to advise, train and equip the Government Diamond Office and its officials. In March, the Kimberley Process sent its third expert mission to Liberia, in close cooperation with the United Nations sanctions panel and supported by UNMIL, and found that Liberia did meet Kimberley Process requirements. Those findings were reported to the Security Council, which, by its resolution 1753 (2007) of 27 April 2007, decided to lift the diamond embargo. Liberia was admitted to the Kimberley Process on 4 May 2007. Several friends of Liberia are working with its Government to support Kimberley Process implementation.

Again, much remains to be done, but we believe this is a real milestone, laying the necessary foundation for diamonds to contribute to prosperity, rather than conflict, in West Africa.

Those two success stories continue the positive history of the Kimberley Process. Participants and observers have worked hard during the past year to strengthen the Kimberley Process, and have succeeded in tackling some of the outstanding challenges and in advancing standards, particularly with respect to trading and manufacturing centres.

Let me say a word on participation in the Kimberley Process, the continued interest in which clearly demonstrates its strength and credibility. The scheme has remained open, on a global and non-discriminatory basis, to all countries and regional economic integration organizations willing and able to fulfil its requirements. In addition to Liberia, we welcomed Turkey and the Republic of the Congo this year. We have worked with applicant countries to ensure that they are fully prepared to assume the responsibilities of Kimberley Process participation. Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Egypt, Mali, Mexico and Tunisia attended the Brussels Plenary and affirmed their intention to join; while Bahrain, Cape Verde, Gabon, Swaziland and Zambia have all expressed an interest in future participation.

Civil society's involvement has been successfully broadened, with a record number of non-governmental organizations attending the Plenary meeting, including many from producer countries. It is to be hoped that this will lead to greater cooperation between Governments and civil society at the national level as well.

We have made good progress on monitoring. In the past four years, over 50 on-the-ground inspection visits have been carried out to Kimberley Process participants and applicants, each staffed entirely by volunteers, in a remarkable case of burden-sharing. Although the system of peer review is voluntary, in practice virtually all participants have demonstrated their openness to scrutiny and their willingness to improve. The second round of review visits has now been launched, with one such visit carried out already and a number under preparation.

At the beginning of this year, the Kimberley Process publicly released its production and trade statistics for the first time, to increase transparency and allow others to analyse the data. Statistics form an integral part of monitoring, and statistical analyses were prepared for all peer review visits over the past year. The Kimberley Process analysed the 2006 data, identifying a number of human errors, procedures to be corrected and issues for further work. All participants submitted the required statistical reports for 2005 and 2006, supported by continuing training opportunities made available by the Canadian Government.

We have also seen this past year increasing amounts of technical assistance and training in support of Kimberley Process implementation, as well as a willingness to identify where there are needs. Some countries have volunteered to increase their contributions to the Kimberley Process by service in working groups, training or by providing financing. That is a wonderful testimony to the spirit of cooperation among the three segments that constitute the Kimberley Process.

On the technical side, there has been continuing work to identify profiles of diamond production so that anomalies can be picked up. We expect further efforts over the medium term to place diamond identification techniques on a sound scientific basis.

Artisanal alluvial diamond mining accounts for a significant proportion of worldwide diamond production, but controlling it involves particular challenges, which are the focus of the working group of artisanal alluvial producers. That group has analysed the situation in each country with regard to artisanal alluvial production, assessing their controls in the light of Kimberley Process recommendations and considering progress, obstacles encountered and remaining challenges. It plans to develop further efforts on capacity building, traceability and tackling illicit cross-border trade.

With the Brussels Initiative on diamonds from Côte d'Ivoire, we believe there is a real possibility for the Kimberley Process to support a truly regional approach to diamonds in West Africa. In South America we also see promising signs of regional collaboration to address the challenges of controlling diamond production there.

A review of the Kimberley Process completed in November 2006 concluded that it had been effective in curbing the illicit trade in conflict diamonds. But it also noted that reforms were needed to adapt to new challenges and increasing demands. Many of those recommendations have been carried out, putting the Kimberley Process on a more solid footing: a compilation of rules and procedures, a new and more transparent website and the formalization of two of its working bodies.

At the same time, the Kimberley Process preserves its flexibility to respond pragmatically and appropriately to the different challenges it faces, through diplomatic messages, technical assistance, training and geological industry or statistical expertise. The Kimberley Process, as an innovative model of burden-sharing, has fostered a sense of ownership by participants and observers, many of whom have devoted considerable resources to strengthening implementation. Both human and financial resources have been deployed by a great many participants, through the provision of technical assistance, participation in working groups and in peer review teams.

The draft resolution before the Assembly today is not a short one. Indeed, it has grown to six pages, which is a testament to the many areas of activity in which the Assembly has been engaged in the past year and those which are planned for next year. I wish to draw the Assembly's attention to a technical change which will be introduced in the final text. The word "participants" will have a capital "P".

But thanks to the hard work of government, industry and civil society representatives around the world, the Kimberley Process remains one of the most successful and inspirational examples of how to break the link between natural resources and conflict. Although the availability of conflict diamonds is currently much reduced, the Kimberley Process is a vital tool of conflict prevention and deterrence.

We wish India, as the Chair for 2008, and Namibia, as Vice-Chair, every success. We assure them of our support, as we express our gratitude for the support of the past chairs of the Kimberley Process, who have all demonstrated great leadership — South Africa, Canada, the Russian Federation and Botswana.

I must also express my sincere gratitude to all those who have participated in this work over the past year, particularly the chairs of the working groups and committees, but also to all those in government, industry and civil society who have shown so much dedication in working together.

It remains for me, on behalf of the European Community, to express my heartfelt thanks to the United Nations, which has been a constant source of inspiration, support, expertise and encouragement to do better. We have worked closely with the sanctions committees and their experts in the cases of Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, and look forward to ever broader and deeper cooperation with all the relevant parts of the United Nations system.

Mr. Outlule (Botswana): The delegation of Botswana extends its sincere appreciation to the delegation of the European Community in the person of Mr. Karel Kovanda, Chair of the 2007 Kimberley Process, for introducing an informative, clear, comprehensive — in a word, excellent — report under agenda item 13, as well as for introducing draft resolution A/62/L.16, as orally corrected.

We commend the European Community for providing sterling leadership during its tenure. In this connection, we welcome with great appreciation the substantial progress achieved in consolidating and strengthening the Kimberley Process, as called for by the recommendations of the Kimberley Process Three-

Year Review and the Gaborone Kimberley Process annual meeting held in 2006.

The Kimberley Process is critically important to the attainment of the universal objective of breaking the link between the illicit transaction of rough diamonds and armed conflict. It is a clear testimony of the phenomenal impact which the individual and combined efforts of Governments, industry and civil society can have on matters of international peace and security. In this respect, the Kimberley Process has and deserves our continuing resolute support and unwavering commitment.

We salute Member States for playing their part by actively participating and complying with the requirements of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme. That is imperative for both the credibility and success of the Kimberley Process. The widest possible participation of the international community is essential for the effectiveness of the Kimberley Process. We therefore welcome the Member States that joined the Kimberley Process during 2007 and encourage others in a position to join to do so.

I wish to reiterate the fact that for most developing countries natural resources should be a blessing rather than a curse. Natural resources are a common heritage of the people and should be a source of hope for a better life and a better future.

In Botswana and in many other countries in our African region, we have begun translating this hope into reality by ensuring that all mineral rights are vested in the State. Over the years, the Government of Botswana consistently used and continues to use the revenue from minerals, especially diamonds, to provide education, health, housing, roads and telecommunications for the benefit of all citizens — in a word, development.

We recognize that there have been outbreaks of conflict in some parts of the developing world, particularly in Africa, in which a diamond, a natural resource of great beauty, was illicitly used to finance or fuel conflict, the so-called conflict diamonds.

These so-called conflict diamonds continue to be a matter of serious concern to Botswana and the international community as a whole. However, we are pleased that as a result of the strong support by the international community and initiatives such as the Kimberley Process, significant strides continue to be made to halt and prevent the illicit diamond trade.

Today, we, the diamond producers, exporters, importers and consumers, have committed ourselves to upholding the highest standards set for diamond trade, not only to safeguard against illicit diamonds entering legitimate trade, but also to ensure that never again will diamonds be a source of such human destruction and suffering as was the case in a number of countries not too long ago.

The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme has been effectively transformed into a credible and globally recognized tracking system for rough diamonds, enabling the diamond industry to regain legitimacy as well as to promote greater transparency in the diamond trade. We applaud all Member States that have provided leadership in the fight to eliminate the illicit transaction of rough diamonds by extending technical support to other countries to fully implement the requirements of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme.

It is heartening to note that even though a large majority of diamonds have always been from legitimate sources, today more than ever before, diamonds have become a source of funding for social progression and economic development in more countries, including some countries in Africa that were affected by conflict.

We are pleased that Liberia, a country that has emerged from one of the most brutal conflicts, is now counted among the countries meeting the basic minimum requirements of the Kimberley Process. We are optimistic that with the continued support of the international community, Liberia will progress on a steadfast path to full post-conflict recovery and sustainable economic development. In the not-too-distant future, resources, including diamonds, will undoubtedly contribute immensely to this process.

Commendable progress has also been made in other countries, such as Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire. To this end, my delegation is particularly pleased that diamond resources are now increasingly being channelled towards funding critical socio-economic benefits such as education, health facilities, combating HIV/AIDS, providing clean water, roads, electricity and numerous other developmental challenges that developing countries confront.

Botswana and a number of other countries can indeed attest to the good that diamonds can do. For the past four decades diamonds have been our lifeline and not only do they continue today to be the mainstay of our economy, but they promise to do so in the foreseeable future. A combination of good governance, visionary leadership, prudent management and diamonds catapulted Botswana from being a least developed country to its current middle income status. And the proceeds from diamonds remain the critical revenue base for causing all our social and economic indicators to advance. It is for that reason that Botswana will always go the extra mile to protect the integrity of diamonds and their continued appeal to consumers.

Botswana fully supports draft resolution A/61/L.16, as orally corrected. The draft resolution reaffirms the unique relationship between the United Nations system and the Kimberley Process and reiterates the validity of continued cooperation. It calls for the full implementation of other related Security Council measures and General Assembly resolutions. That will help bring better coordination and sharper focus to the linkage between the work of the Kimberley Process and that of the United Nations in its endeavour to maintain international peace and security.

The provisions of the draft resolution endorse the decisions of the Brussels Plenary that highlight the achievements of the Kimberley Process and the challenges ahead. It sets out a road map on how to address those challenges and to build on best practices. That forms the basis of the mandate for the 2008 Chair of the Kimberley Process.

The delegation of Botswana takes this opportunity to assure both the incoming Chair of the Kimberley Process, India, and the Vice-Chair, Namibia, of our continued goodwill, support and cooperation in the coming years.

We encourage all Member States to support the adoption of draft resolution A/62/L.16, as orally corrected, which embodies our unwavering commitment to breaking the link between the illicit transaction of rough diamonds and armed conflict, as a contribution to the prevention and settlement of conflicts.

In conclusion, Botswana attaches the utmost importance to this matter because it is crucial to our ability to reassure consumers, as we begin this season of goodwill and giving, that they can buy, give and wear diamonds with equanimity, in the full knowledge that they have been certified conflict-free by the Kimberley Process and that in buying such diamonds they are contributing to the development of many developing countries, including my own country, Botswana.

Mr. Rodger Young (United States of America): The United States is pleased to be a sponsor of the draft resolution A/62/L.16, on the role of diamonds in fuelling conflict.

The international community has much to be proud of when it comes to the efforts of the Kimberley Process. It is a tribute to the Kimberley Process that conflict diamonds today make up only a small percentage of the world's diamond market. With the Kimberley Process, the international community now has the tools to head off future conflict and promote stability and security in diamond-rich regions of the world.

The unique manner in which Governments, the diamond industry and civil society have worked together in the Kimberley Process to monitor and control the rough diamond trade should stand as a model as we confront other sources of conflict. This multi-stakeholder effort demonstrates what can be accomplished when Governments join forces with the private sector and non-governmental organizations.

We take this opportunity salute our European Community colleagues who have led the Kimberley Process in 2007 to encourage the major diamond trading and manufacturing centres to strengthen internal controls over the diamond markets. European leadership also positioned the Kimberley Process to address the ongoing problem of diamond smuggling from Côte d'Ivoire through neighbouring West African countries. We are confident that those initiatives, launched under the European leadership, will remain the hallmark of Kimberley Process efforts in the years ahead.

We were also particularly pleased, in 2007, to welcome Liberia as a participant in the Kimberley Process. The Liberian Government moved quickly in the past year to capitalize on international support. Liberia set up a credible diamond monitoring system to enable the lifting of Security Council sanctions on its diamond exports and to participate in the Kimberley Process. We appreciate the long way Liberia has come,

from an era when diamonds financed brutal atrocities to the point today, when diamonds are a positive force and are playing a positive role in the country's economic reconstruction.

The United States also welcomes the efforts of donor countries to provide technical assistance to help Kimberley Process participants strengthen their internal controls. We believe that one of the best means of supporting stability and preventing renewed conflict in diamond-producing areas is to foster Kimberley Process controls at the same time that we support development opportunities for mining communities.

We look forward to working closely with India as it assumes the Chair and with Namibia as it assumes the vice-chairmanship of the Kimberley Process in 2008.

Mr. Malhotra (India): I am grateful for this opportunity to address the General Assembly on agenda item 13, "The role of diamonds in fuelling conflict".

Many developing countries are vitally dependent on their natural resources for achieving their development goals. Yet, ironically, those very natural resources have served to cause and prolong conflict in several countries as a result of the misuse of wealth generated from such resources. Diamonds in particular have played a significant role in that regard. In addition to financing devastating armed conflicts, the illicit trade in rough diamonds also impacts negatively on the legitimate international trade in diamonds. It is therefore crucial to end the trade in illicit diamonds.

The issue of natural resources fuelling conflict should not be seen solely through the narrow prism of peace and security. Instead, efforts to address the issue must be made through the perspective of an overall development agenda. Moreover, such efforts need to focus not only on the supply side, but on all parts of the supply chain, including processing, trading and purchase by the consumer.

In that regard, the Kimberley Process is an innovative and useful mechanism. It approaches the problem not merely at the level of extraction, but also from the standpoint of processing and trading. Its Certification Scheme has been particularly effective in validating and regulating the production of rough diamonds and their trade. It fully affirms the sovereignty of States in the Process and is driven by voluntary efforts by its participants. In addition, it has an inclusive approach that extends to the entire international community, including producing, exporting and importing countries, as well as the diamond industry and civil society. For those reasons, major diamond trading and processing countries such as India have engaged constructively and actively with the Process and support its full implementation.

We welcome the decisions taken at the Plenary of the Kimberley Process held in Brussels earlier this month, which are reflected in the Brussels communiqué. In particular, we support the need for strong government oversight of rough diamond trading and manufacturing, with greater internal control.

We would also like to convey our appreciation to the European Commission, as Chair of the Kimberley Process during 2007, for its efforts during the year towards strengthening the implementation of the Process and its initiative in the publication of diamond production and trade statistics. We welcome the re-admission of the Republic of Congo to the Kimberley Process and the joining by Liberia and Turkey as new participants.

We would like to congratulate Ghana on its efforts in the implementation of Kimberley Process. We support continuing peer review visits, and would also like to thank the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for its invitation for a visit next year. We also look forward to the implementation of the Brussels initiative on diamonds from Côte d'Ivoire.

As Chair of the Kimberley Process for 2008, India will strengthen the Kimberley Process mechanism by building on previous traditions and conventions, and will strive to implement the decisions taken during the Brussels Plenary through the active engagement of the Kimberley Process working groups and committees. India will continue to extend assistance to Kimberley Process members to build effective internal controls on the production, processing and trade of rough diamonds. This is crucial for ensuring growth of the legitimate diamond trade and protection of the livelihoods of so many people around the globe. We look forward to receiving the support and cooperation of all participants of the Kimberley Process, civil society and industry representatives.

In conclusion, while mechanisms like the Kimberley Processes play an important role in

breaking the link between illicit transactions in rough diamonds and armed conflict, a lasting solution would have to involve the effective and consensual exploitation of natural resources in a way that benefits society as a whole.

Mr. Mbuende (Namibia): My delegation is pleased to sponsor and support draft resolution A/62/L.16, on the role of diamonds in fuelling conflict. In taking up this draft resolution, the General Assembly once again recognizes the reality that trade in conflict diamonds remains a crucial factor in prolonging conflicts in many parts of the world. Most important, by breaking the link between the legitimate diamond trade and conflict diamonds, the General Assembly is making a clear statement that clean diamonds can contribute to prosperity and development in many parts of the world. We hope that similar efforts will be made so that other natural resources such as oil, timber, gold, copper, water and land do not fuel conflicts, and that, if they do, the General Assembly will rise to the occasion and take appropriate action.

For Africa, diamonds are one of the major natural resources with which the continent is endowed. About 65 per cent of the world's diamonds, worth over $8 billion, are sourced from Africa every year. In Southern Africa, the diamond industry employs more than 38,000 people; at the global level about 10 million people are either directly or indirectly supported by the diamond industry.

From its own experience, Namibia owes its advances in development to the exploitation of mineral resources, especially diamonds, which account for about 70 per cent of all our export earnings, 12 per cent of our gross domestic product and 8 per cent of Government revenue. Last year alone, Namibia produced diamonds worth approximately $700 million. For our people, every Namibian diamond purchased on the world market thus represents food on the table, the provision of essential social services such as health care, and the construction of more schools, hospitals and roads to connect our rural communities.

It is against this background that Namibia wishes to reiterate its full commitment to the Kimberley Process. We believe that the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme guarantees transparency in marketing our diamonds. It also provides a valuable platform for cooperation among diamond-producing countries.

Through the multilateral efforts of the Kimberley Process we have made remarkable progress in a relatively short period of time to control the flows of conflict diamonds, including through increased Government oversight of the industry. We encourage donors to continue helping the diamond-producing countries of the Kimberley Process, which need to build and strengthen their capacity to implement controls and monitor the diamond trade from mine to export.

As a diamond-producing country, Namibia has put in place a robust and comprehensive regulatory regime in order to protect the integrity of its diamond industry from conflict diamonds. In addition, a number of Government agencies, including the Diamonds Inspectorate in the Ministry of Mines and Energy and the Protected Resources Unit of the Namibia police, have been established and are specifically charged with protecting our diamonds from smuggling and other illicit activities. In this way, Namibia is contributing to international efforts aimed at curbing the flow of conflict diamonds and at ensuring international peace and security.

My delegation wishes to thank the European Commission for the leadership it has provided to the Kimberley Process this year. We also wish to congratulate India on assuming the chairmanship of the Kimberley Process for 2008. As Vice-Chair, Namibia looks forward to a year of continued close cooperation.

Ms. Hulan (Canada): My delegation welcomes this opportunity to share views on the important issue of the role of diamonds in fuelling conflict. Canada remains a strong supporter the Kimberley Process, which after just four years of operation has increased accountability, transparency and effective Government regulation of the trade in rough diamonds. In doing so, it has had remarkable success in breaking the link between the global diamond trade and armed conflict.

Allow me to begin by extending my delegation's sincere thanks to the European Commission for coordinating the resolution before us today, and for its successful tenure as Chair of the Kimberley Process over the past year. A number of important improvements to the Process have been made under the Commission's stewardship, including implementation of many of the recommendations of the three-year review, the near completion of a first round of peer review visits and the adoption of the Brussels

Declaration on internal controls and the Brussels initiative on diamonds from Côte d'Ivoire. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the Republic of Congo, Liberia and Turkey into the Kimberley Process.

Finally, my delegation extends a warm welcome to India as incoming Kimberley Process Chair, and our congratulations go to Namibia on its selection as Vice-Chair for 2008. We look forward to working with both delegations to further strengthen the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme in the coming year.

Among the achievements of the past year, perhaps none has been more important than the impressive progress Ghana has made in improving its system of internal controls over rough diamonds. Canada commends the constructive and transparent manner in which Ghana has engaged the Kimberley Process, and we welcome the commitment the Government has shown to completing reform of its internal controls. We recognize that, in doing so, Ghana is not only bringing itself into compliance with the Kimberley Process, but is also making an important contribution to ensuring that illicit diamonds from Côte d'Ivoire do not enter the legitimate global trade.

Equally, Canada welcomes Liberia's participation in the Kimberley Process and commends Liberia's efforts to establish a rigorous set of import and export controls for rough diamonds. Following the removal of the United Nations diamond sanctions that had been in place for six years, Liberia's first official diamond exports were made in September 2007. Liberia's progress is testament not only to the Government's commitment, but also to the Kimberley Process participants and observers who have assisted Liberia's efforts to eliminate its conflict diamond trade. We offer our encouragement to Liberia as it continues to refine its system of controls over rough diamonds.

Canada also welcomes the emerging regional cooperation aimed at stemming the illicit cross-border movement of rough diamonds in West Africa and South America. Regional harmonization and cooperation is one of the most promising means of strengthening the international community's capacity to monitor and control the movement of rough diamonds, particularly where porous borders make doing so a challenge. We encourage participants to strengthen regional cooperation in other parts of the world as well.

One of the unique features of the Kimberley Process, and indeed one of the key contributors to its success, has been the innovation and flexibility that it has shown through rigorous self-examination and improvement during its first four years. This practice and the spirit that guides it must be maintained if the Process is to be successful in identifying and closing the gaps that remain in its system of control over rough diamonds.

In particular, the Process will need to be steadfast in taking timely and effective action to address emerging crises. One of its most important innovations in this regard has been the development of a comprehensive and credible system of peer review to monitor the implementation of Kimberley Process standards and practices in participant countries. In this spirit, we encourage the Process and its members to examine the possibility of further developing its capacity to expose and address new cases of trading in conflict diamonds that emerge in the future.

In this regard, Canada recognizes the crucial role that nongovernmental organization observers — particularly that of Global Witness and Partnership for Africa Canada — play in the monitoring, and the important contributions that those organizations have made to the credibility and accountability of the Process. We are very pleased that the number of civil society organizations participating in the Kimberley Process is expanding. Canada urges all participants to continue working constructively with these organizations, and to recognize their important contribution in support of our shared objectives.

The Kimberley Process is making a major contribution to breaking the link between rough diamonds and armed conflict. It stands as a testament to what can be achieved through the innovative and systematic collaboration of Governments, the United Nations, the private sector and civil society. However, here in the United Nations, we have for years approached the larger issue of natural resources and conflict on an ad hoc, case by case, resource by resource basis. Canada strongly encourages the United Nations to consider a more comprehensive approach to its work in this area. By examining the intersection between the exploitation of natural resources and the persistence, and in some cases intensification, of armed conflicts, we believe the international community will be better placed to find durable solutions to these types of conflicts.

Mr. Maksimychev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Our delegation feels that the Kimberley Process has functioned well and has, to date, made substantial progress in achieving its basic purposes, including discharging tasks set for it by decisions of the Security Council and other United Nations bodies. That progress has helped significantly to strengthen its authority. We would like to commend our colleagues from the European Union for successfully chairing the Process this year, in particular, for holding the plenary meeting of the Kimberley Process in Brussels from 5 to 8 November of this year and for preparing the draft resolution on conflict diamonds for the sixty-second session of the General Assembly.

Today, the Kimberley Process is a very complex body, implementing a whole host of functions that are sensitive for its participants. Based on this fact, we believe it essential to increase the efforts of the international community to further develop the mechanisms of the Kimberley Process and its legal basis.

It is obvious that growth in the effectiveness of the Kimberley Process directly depends on ensuring the universality of its membership and agreement on the actions of all its working bodies. In view of the significance of the diamond business and its specific features, it is important to broaden the circle of participants and observers to the Kimberley Process. In this regard, we welcome the decisions of Liberia, Turkey and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to become full-fledged participants.

The draft resolution that we are to adopt today reflects the substantive progress and momentum achieved under the Kimberley Process in 2007. At the same time, we are convinced that much still remains to be done to increase effectiveness in implementing the mandates of the Kimberley Process, in particular, in revitalizing work to carry out decisions to review one of its main foundations, namely, the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme. We consequently support efforts to implement recommendations of the plenary sessions in Gaborone and Brussels, which are aimed at strengthening control measures in trading, polishing and manufacturing centres.

The peer review mechanism known as the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme is a very important instrument of the Process. We believe that in planning and carrying out review visits it is especially vital to focus efforts on countries with problems in implementing the minimum requirements of the Certification Scheme as well as on those requiring technical assistance.

For our part, Russia, in its State agencies and in the diamond sector and civil society, is prepared to continue to do its utmost within the United Nations, the Kimberley Process, other international organizations and forums, as well as on a bilateral basis, to prevent the use of rough diamonds to fuel international conflicts.

In accordance with the decision of the plenary in Gaborone in 2006, Russia was appointed the Chair of the Kimberley Process committee on rules and procedures. All of our efforts in the past year have been aimed at developing new and improved operational rules and procedures, with the understanding that they need to be aimed at resolving timely committee items and should be transparent and comprehensible, not only to participants to the Process, but to the broader public.

Like others who have spoken on this agenda item, we would also like to wish India as the new Chair of the Kimberley Process and Namibia as the new Vice-chair success in their posts for the coming year.

In conclusion, it is obvious that, for technical reasons, Russia is not listed among the sponsors of draft resolution A/62/L.16. We would like to state that we have now joined the sponsors and we would ask for that to be reflected in the official record.

Mr. Kemp (Australia): Australia is a strong supporter of the Kimberley Process. After just four years of operation, the Kimberley Process has increased transparency and facilitated effective government regulation of the trade in rough diamonds. As such, it has had a remarkable success in breaking the link between this trade and armed conflict, and is evidence of what can be achieved through the collective efforts of Governments, the United Nations, the private sector and civil society.

Australia wishes to fully align itself with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Canada. Australia also wishes to co-sponsor the resolution on this item.

Mr. Antonio (Angola): Allow me first to congratulate the European Community on a job well done during its chairmanship of the Kimberley Process

this year. That has resulted in a gradual consolidation of the Process, greater transparency through the publication of more complete series of production and trade statistics, and better overall information about the diamond industry throughout the world. I also commend the chairmanship for the presentation of the annual report and the European Commission for its leadership during the consultations on the draft resolution now before the Assembly (A/62/L.16), which my country fully supports. I wish a very successful mandate to India as forthcoming Chair and to Namibia as forthcoming Vice-Chair.

Since its creation, the Kimberley Process has made a valuable contribution to peace and stability, especially in Africa. Indeed, the rules introduced by the Process have tightened control over both the production and the flow of diamonds in the international market. The establishment of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme for raw diamonds, which went into effect in January 2003, and the commitment of the Scheme's members to its implementation, as well as the sanctions adopted by the Security Council, relating primarily to several African countries, were decisive factors contributing to the end of conflicts, including in my country, Angola, where a war was being waged over and funded by so-called blood diamonds. The five-year peace in Angola is, in effect, a good indication of the success of the Kimberley Process and, in particular, of the Certification Scheme.

African countries account for approximately 65 per cent of the global production of diamonds, which amounts to an estimated $8.4 billion a year. The economies of some African countries are based on the production of and the trade in diamonds; in others, diamonds are a key contributor to the well-being of the population and the development of infrastructure. Therefore, the need to protect and properly manage such a valuable mineral resource cannot be underestimated.

Now that the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme is legally valid in more than 45 countries, that instrument needs to be supported by an internal control system in each country. Such a system must be developed in order to give real meaning to each certificate issued by the relevant national authority. Therefore, there is a strong case for building the capacity of regulatory and enforcement authorities, particularly in Africa, which is home to the main producing countries.

In that connection, Angola, one of the pioneers in launching the Kimberley Process, has created the Diamond Inspection and Safety Corps, a specialized force responsible for the safety of Angolan diamonds. In particular, it is responsible for ensuring their safe transportation to Luanda from mining project sites or buying centres in the interior. The force also controls security at sorting facilities in Luanda and is present at every stage as diamond parcels are opened, sorted, valued and repackaged for export.

In order to constantly improve the implementation of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme and to update the country's mining industry so that it is in line with the dynamic of the world economy, two multisectoral ministerial commissions have been established in Angola by presidential decree. They are tasked primarily with reviewing existing national mining legislation and, in particular, ensuring the protection of national diamond resources.

Those measures have been instrumental in the progress made by the Angolan diamond sector over the past five years of peace. Production nearly doubled, from 5 million carats in 2002 to almost 9.5 million carats in 2006. Gross income from diamond sales nearly doubled as well, from $638 million in 2002 to $1.2 billion in 2006. During the same period, Government revenue increased threefold, from $45 million to $165 million.

At the international level, the Republic of Angola played a pivotal role in the establishment, in Luanda in November 2006, of the African Diamond Producing Countries Association, whose objective is to coordinate policies and strategies for the sustained and durable development of the African diamond industry.

As rightly stated in paragraph 13 of the draft resolution before the Assembly, Angola is Chair of the Working Group of the Kimberley Process of Artisanal Alluvial Producers, which was established at a plenary meeting of the Process held in Gaborone, Botswana, in November 2006, as a result of successive decisions taken at previous plenary meetings held in Gatineau, Canada, and Moscow, Russia, in 2004 and 2005, respectively. As members are aware, the Working Group's mission is to ensure the implementation of the recommendations set out in the Moscow Declaration with regard to improving internal control over artisanal

and small-scale exploration for alluvial diamonds and promoting the exchange of good practices.

In Angola, artisanal exploration for diamonds is legally allowed only in specific areas where mechanized mining is not commercially viable. A license is mandatory and must be obtained before artisanal mining activity is allowed. Artisanal diamond miners — who in Angola are known as *garimpeiros* — must be 18 or older, must possess a valid identification document and must have been a resident for at least 10 years in the country or adjacent area where mining activity is to be undertaken.

Given the strategic importance of diamonds, particularly for certain African countries, it is important that particular attention be accorded to this area by the Governments of both their producers and their main importers. The fight against illicit diamond trafficking and fraud should therefore be an ongoing commitment on the part of all involved. In the context of combating the illicit cross-border trafficking of diamonds, bilateral, subregional and regional cooperation through economic clusters should continue to be the focus of consultations among interested parties with a view to reducing or eradicating that crime.

Judging by the progress made thus far by the Kimberley Process, we can attain the objectives set by the Assembly when it added this item to its agenda. That would make an important contribution to breaking the link between illicit transaction of rough diamonds and armed conflicts — a goal that we can achieve through sustained efforts and concerted action.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

Before we proceed further, I should like to consult the Assembly with a view to proceeding immediately to consider the draft resolution contained in document A/62/L.16. In that connection, since the draft resolution was circulated only today, it would be necessary to waive the relevant provision of rule 78 of the rules of procedure. The relevant provision of rule 78 reads as follows:

> "As a general rule, no proposal shall be discussed or put to the vote at any meeting of the General Assembly unless copies of it have been circulated to all delegations not later than the day preceding the meeting".

Unless I hear any objections, I shall take it that the Assembly agrees with the proposal.

It was so decided.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/62/L.16, entitled "The role of diamonds in fuelling conflict: breaking the link between the illicit transaction of rough diamonds and armed conflict as a contribution to prevention and settlement of conflicts", as orally corrected.

Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, the following countries have joined the sponsors of A/62/L.16: Angola, Australia, Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Luxembourg, Moldova, Montenegro, Russian Federation, Serbia, Singapore and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

I would also like to inform members that Japan has withdrawn from sponsorship of draft resolution A/62/L.16.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/62/L.16, as orally corrected?

Draft resolution A/62/L.16, as orally corrected, was adopted (resolution 62/11).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of the agenda item?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 76 (*continued*)

Report of the International Criminal Court

Draft resolution A/62/L.13

The Acting President: Members will recall that the Assembly held its debate on this agenda item at its 42nd and 43rd plenary meetings, on 1 November 2007. In connection with this item, the Assembly now has before it a draft resolution issued as document A/62/L.13.

I give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands to introduce draft resolution A/62/L.13.

Mr. Majoor (Netherlands): I have the honour this afternoon to introduce under the agenda item entitled, "Report of the International Criminal Court" draft

resolution A/62/L.13 entitled, "Report of the International Criminal Court".

In addition to the nearly 100 countries mentioned in document A/62/L.13, the following countries have indicated their wish to be included as sponsors of the draft resolution: Afghanistan, Chad, Chile, Guinea, Haiti, Madagascar, Montenegro and Saint Kitts and Nevis. This brings the total number of sponsors for this draft resolution to 107.

On 1 November, the President of the International Criminal Court presented the third annual report of the International Criminal Court to this body. We had a very constructive and in-depth debate then, and I do not want to repeat that discussion here today. Allow me though to highlight a few elements.

The establishment of the Court was the most significant development in recent years in our long and ongoing struggle to eradicate impunity. In the few years that it has been operational, the Court has, as was stated by the United Nations Secretary-General in his statement marking the fifth anniversary of the Court, established itself as the centrepiece of a system of international criminal justice.

In that regard, we will continue to strive for universal adherence to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. We are therefore very pleased to welcome the countries that have recently become a party to the Rome Statute and it is our sincere hope that others will join soon.

The International Criminal Court's annual report, as well as the debate in the General Assembly a few weeks ago, underlined the important role the International Criminal Court plays in our common multilateral system that aims to end impunity and to establish the rule of law, to promote and encourage respect for human rights and to restore and maintain international peace and security. It is our firm conviction that sustainable peace cannot be achieved, if perpetrators of the most serious crimes are not brought to justice. Peace and justice are thus complementary requirements.

The President of the International Criminal Court in his address to the General Assembly stressed the fact that cooperation between the Court and the United Nations and cooperation by States and international and regional organizations are fundamental to an effectively and efficiently functioning Court — especially in relation to the arrest and surrender of accused persons, the provision of evidence, the relocation of witnesses and the enforcement of sentences. We are pleased that the United Nations has again assisted the Court over the last year in its endeavours through implementation of the Relationship Agreement. We also welcome the assistance provided so far by not only by States parties but also by non-States parties, and I call on all States to continue to support the Court's efforts. The continued support of civil society deserves to be mentioned as well.

The draft resolution before us today serves three main objectives: first, to provide political support for the International Criminal Court as an organization, for its mandate and its aims, as well as for the work it carries out; secondly, to underline the importance of the relationship between the International Criminal Court and the United Nations, upon which the two organizations continue to build, on the basis of the Relationship Agreement and lastly, it serves to remind States and international and regional organizations of the need to cooperate with the International Criminal Court as it carries out its tasks.

The Netherlands hopes that this draft resolution will be adopted by consensus and that it will lead to even greater support for the International Criminal Court in its fight against impunity and its attempts to hold those accused of very serious crimes accountable for their actions.

The Acting President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/62/L.13. Before giving the floor to the speaker in explanation of vote before the vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America.

Mr. Wolff (United States of America): The concerns of the United States about the Rome Statute and the International Criminal Court (ICC) are well known. They include the ICC's claimed authority to assert jurisdiction over nationals not parties to the Rome Statute, including United States nationals, and the lack of adequate oversight over the ICC's Prosecutor, who may initiate cases without first seeking approval of the Security Council.

Accordingly, the United States disassociates itself from the consensus on this draft resolution. In spite of its concerns, the United States made a genuine effort to work with the draft resolution's sponsors to find common ground. Over the past three years, we have stated clearly, consistently and repeatedly, that we respect the rights of other States to become parties to the Rome Statute, and we have asked in return that other States respect our decision and right not to become a party. Our efforts to find common ground reflect our belief that while parties and non-parties to the Rome Statute have different views about the ICC, they should nonetheless be able to work together in a spirit of mutual respect and cooperation to advance their common interests in promoting accountability for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

We are disappointed and surprised to find again this year that the sponsors of this draft resolution do not appear prepared to move forward in this spirit. Again this year, the sponsors have declined to include language in the draft resolution that expresses respect for, or even recognition of, the decisions of some States not to become parties to the Rome Statute. The sponsors of the draft resolution apparently view such a basic expression of respect as inconsistent with their aspiration of universal membership for the ICC, as if it is, in fact, somehow illegitimate for a State to choose not to become party to the Rome Statute. By their actions, they have made clear that the pragmatic modus vivendi that we have been seeking to promote is simply not working.

As a historical matter, we find some irony in this current emphasis on universality. During the Rome Conference the United States worked tirelessly to convince delegations of the wisdom of an approach to the ICC that would have permitted more States to join the Court. This appeal was rejected in favour of a narrower approach embraced by a smaller group of like-minded States.

As a practical matter, we find this position to be counterproductive. The ICC is unlikely ever to attain universal membership. Yet the same ICC supporters who refuse to express respect for the decisions of non-parties unabashedly seek assistance for the ICC from non-parties, and seek support of non-parties for assistance to the ICC by the United Nations and other international organizations. They seem to think that the relationship with non-parties can be a one-way proposition, in which ICC parties only take and give nothing in return.

Such an unbalanced approach is untenable. Meaningful assistance from non-parties is far less likely to be forthcoming, and cooperative efforts to advance the fight against impunity are made far more difficult, so long as ICC supporters continue to disrespect the positions of non-parties. We will get further together by agreeing to disagree about the ICC and cooperating on matters of common interest than we will through the continuation of efforts by ICC parties to convert those States who have legally and legitimately exercised their right not to join.

We also note with concern the statement in the draft resolution encouraging States parties to the Rome Statute to take the interests, needs for assistance and mandate of the ICC into account when relevant matters are being discussed in the United Nations. To the extent that by this statement the General Assembly seeks to encourage a particular group of Member States to influence the deliberations or decisions of other organs of the United Nations, we consider it an inappropriate interference in the work of those organs.

More generally, we are concerned by the suggestion that, as a matter of general principle, it is the responsibility of the United Nations to facilitate the work of the ICC. In this regard, we note the claim of the President of the ICC that the so-called enforcement pillar of the Rome Statute, which includes the arrest and surrender of suspects and the protection of victims and witnesses, has been reserved to States and, by extension, international organizations. This seems to us to misperceive the relationship between the ICC and the United Nations.

It is, of course, true that in some cases the work of the ICC and the work of the United Nations may be complementary. We note in this regard the decision of the Security Council to refer to the ICC the situation in Darfur. But this will not necessarily be true in every case. It is for the Security Council to decide whether there are circumstances in which assisting the ICC in enforcing its decisions will advance the Council's efforts to address threats to international peace and security. In such cases, the relevant question is whether assisting the ICC will advance the Security Council's mandate and interests, not whether such assistance will advance the ICC's mandate and interests. Particularly where assistance sought by the ICC may involve

difficult and dangerous tasks that ICC States parties are unwilling or unable to carry out on their own, there will be reasons to question whether the Council should agree that the United Nations should shoulder such burdens.

We welcome the addition of language in this year's draft resolution that requests the Secretary-General to report on assistance the United Nations has provided to the ICC and, in particular, on the expenses incurred in connection with such assistance and the reimbursements received for such expenses. This report will provide overdue and much needed transparency with respect to such assistance. We expect that it will include information about assistance to the ICC provided by United Nations peacekeeping and other field missions as well as assistance provided by the United Nations Secretariat in New York and elsewhere in the United Nations system, and will address the nature, extent and costs of such assistance, as well as the reimbursements received by the United Nations.

We note in this regard that General Assembly resolution 58/318 provides that all expenses incurred by the United Nations in connection with such assistance shall be paid in full to the Organization. This decision underscores the importance of respecting the separate status of the two organizations. We look forward to receiving the Secretary-General's report and intend to review it carefully. Accordingly, in conjunction with this draft resolution, we are writing to the Under-Secretary-General for Management to underscore our interest in a thorough review of these issues.

We regret that this draft resolution has become a source of divisiveness rather than an opportunity to build bridges between parties and non-parties to the ICC. We remain sincere in our desire to develop a cooperative approach to promoting international criminal justice, and in our hope that ICC supporters will join us in such efforts.

The Acting President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of position before action is taken on the draft resolution.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/62/L.13. May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/62/L.13?

Draft resolution A/62/L.13 was adopted (resolution 62/12).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 76?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.